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What is claimed is:

1. A method for exchanging information via a communications network,  
the method comprising:

5 receiving, via the communications network, an information request from a  
data requestor, the information request requesting information controlled by a data  
controller, data elements relating to the requested information being stored in a data  
repository controlled by the data controller, the information request comprising a  
statement setting forth parameters relating to collection of the requested information  
by the data requestor;

10 referencing a rule specifying parameters relating to permissible retrieval of a  
requested data element from the data repository in response to the information  
request, the rule having been established for the data element by the data  
controller;

15 if the collection parameters are in accord with the retrieval parameters,  
retrieving the data element from the data repository and using it in accordance with  
the information request; and

if the collection parameters are not in accord with the retrieval parameters,  
responding to the information request with an offer to retrieve the data element for  
use in accordance with the rule.

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2. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

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parsing the information request to identify any data elements relating to the requested information, and to identify the statement setting forth the collection parameters; and

- 5        comparing the collection parameters to the parameters of the rule to determine whether they are in accord.

3.        The method of claim 1, wherein using the data element in accordance with the information request comprises using the data element to customize a display of information on a client device storing the data repository.

- 10        4.        The method of claim 1, wherein using the data element in accordance with the information request comprises using the data element to derive the requested information according to a definition stored in a definitions database.

5.        The method of claim 1, wherein using the data element in accordance with the information request comprises transmitting the data element via a communications network.

- 15        6.        The method of claim 5, wherein the data element is transmitted to the data requestor.

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7. The method of claim 6, further comprising permitting the data controller to access data collected by the data requestor via a maintenance interface.

8. The method of claim 7, further comprising permitting the data controller to modify any data collected by the data requestor via the maintenance interface.

9. The method of claim 7, further comprising permitting the data controller to specify alternative parameters for data already collected by the data requestor via the maintenance interface.

10. The method of claim 9, further comprising transmitting the alternative parameters for such data to any third party data requestors to which the data requestor has previously transmitted such data.

11. The method of claim 10, further comprising:  
storing a data receipt in a transaction log at the client device, the data receipt identifying the data requestor, the data element retrieved from the data repository, and the applicable parameters.

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12. The method of claim 1, wherein the requested information relates to an individual that is a data subject, and wherein the data controller is the data subject.

13. A method for exchanging information via a communications network, the method comprising:

5 a data requestor sending, via the communications network, an information request to a data controller, release of the requested information being controlled the data controller, a corresponding data element relating to the requested information being stored in a data repository controlled by the data controller, the information request including a declarative statement setting forth parameters relating to collection of the requested information by the data requestor;

10 the data requestor receiving, via the communications network, a response to the information request from the data controller, the response including the requested information; and

15 the data requestor storing the requested information in a memory, the requested information being stored in association with parameters representing terms under which the data controller agreed to release the requested information to the data requestor.

14. The method of claim 13, the response further comprising alternative parameters relating to collection of the requested information by the data requestor, the alternative parameters being in accord with a rule specifying parameters relating

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to permissible retrieval of the data element from the data repository in response to the information request, the rule having been established for the data element by the data controller.

15. The method of claim 14, wherein the alternative parameters are stored  
5 by the data requestor in the memory in association with the requested information.

16. The method of claim 14, further comprising:  
the data requestor receiving a subsequent information request from a third  
party data requestor, the subsequent information request requesting information  
controlled by the data controller, the requested information being stored in the  
10 memory controlled by the data requestor;

parsing the subsequent information request to identify information requested  
and a respective declarative statement setting forth parameters relating to collection  
of the requested information by the third party data requestor;

15 comparing the collection parameters to the parameters stored by the data  
requestor in the memory in association with the requested information, the  
parameters relating to permissible retrieval of the requested information from the  
memory in response to the subsequent information request, the rule having been  
established by the data controller;

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if the collection parameters are in accord with the parameters stored by the data requestor, retrieving the requested information from the memory and using it in accordance with the subsequent information request; and

5 if the collection parameters are not in accord with the parameters stored by the data requestor, responding to the subsequent information request with an offer to retrieve the requested information for use in accordance with the parameters.

17. A method for authenticating a request for information exchange, the method comprising and independent trust authority performing the steps of:

10 reviewing a data requestor's information request, the information request relating to retrieval of a data element, the information request comprising a statement providing notice of the data element requested;

comparing the statement of the data element requested to the data element or data elements requested for retrieval by the information requested; and

15 authenticating the information request if the statement provides accurate notice of the data element or data elements requested.

18. The method of claim 17, wherein the authenticating comprises applying a notice that the independent trust authority has authenticated the information request.

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19. The method of claim 17, wherein the authenticating comprises applying a digital signature indicating authenticating by the independent trust authority.

20. A method for exchange of information via a communications network,  
5 the method comprising the steps of:

transmitting, to a data controller, an information request requesting information controlled stored in a data repository controlled by the data controller, the information request including proposed parameters relating to use of the requested information;

10 negotiating with the data controller, if necessary, to obtain agreement as to acceptable parameters relating to use of the requested information;

receiving, from the data controller, the requested information;

storing the requested information in association with the acceptable parameters relating to use of the requested information; and

15 limiting use of the requested information to use in accordance with the acceptable parameters.

21. The method of claim 20, further comprising:

permitting the data controller to subsequently alter the acceptable parameters stored by the data requestor, the method further comprising limiting future use of the  
20 requested information to use in accordance with the altered acceptable parameters.

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22. The method of claim 20, further comprising:

transmitting the requested information relating to the data subject to a third party data requestor only if the third party data requestor agrees to make use of the requested information in accordance with the acceptable parameters.

5           23. The method of claim 20, wherein the negotiation is performed automatically by at least one software-implemented negotiation engine.